1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

INTRODUCTION

THE VALLEY OF MIREBALAIS

THE TRAVELER comes suddenly on the valley of Mirebalais, as the road from the capital turns the shoulder of a hill. Long and narrow, the plain stretches before him with its many tones of green. Ahead is the village from which the valley takes its name, its metal roofs aglow in the sunlight, or reflecting the gray sky of the rainy season. Here and there appears a yellow, muddy slash made by the Artibonite River, while framing the valley are the mountains, rising one behind another as they complete its encirclement.

This first glimpse of the country gives no hint of a numerous population. It is as though this valley, like so many other things in Haiti, had set out to belie its own reality and, in this impression, at the very outset to point the lesson that the observer must seek well beneath the surface if he is to attain any understanding of the country and its people. For just as the unsettled appearance of this Haitian valley conceals numerous habitations, cultivated fields, and hard-working inhabitants, so the frenzy of Haitian religious rites is but a gloss upon disciplined ceremonialism, and the relatively placid everyday existence of the Haitian peasant but a mask behind which is waged a spiritual conflict that is his heritage from the dual sources of his traditions.

The commune of Mirebalais is situated in the heart of central Haiti. Lying some thirty-five miles from Port-au-Prince,

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 19[illegible] SV3 Haiti SV3

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CHAPTER I

THE AFRICAN HERITAGE

For the study of a civilization like that of Haiti, which is the result of close and continued contact between peoples with traditions as dissimilar as those of Europe and Africa, a peculiarly lively sense of time depth is needed. Yet though it has been repeatedly stated that Haiti is the child of Africa and France, even those who proclaim this emphatically fail too often to recognize the need for as detailed a knowledge as is possible of how the strands of history were woven into the fabric of Haitian cultural life. It is for this reason that before any description of the culture of Mirebalais can be attempted, not only must the names of the African tribes from which the Haitians were derived be given, but the broad characteristics of their cultures must be considered and, where possible, the classes of their population from which were derived the Negroes who were brought to Haiti. In addition, the importance of knowing the types of Frenchmen who migrated to the island during its colonial period and of understanding the modes of life they followed and presented to their slaves must be viewed as of the first order, while, finally, the manner in which these two sets of traditions were eventually forged into the structure of Haitian life as seen today must be analyzed if more than a superficial glimpse of this life is to result.

Writing in 1730, a Jesuit priest named Pierre François

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in descent, so there were "colored" folk who were slaves. As time went on, the lighter-colored slaves were usually employed as house-servants rather than field-hands, bringing about a continuous dilution of the Negro blood that flowed in these strains, and a lightening of their skins. And such was the prestige attached to light color that the mixed-bloods, even though slaves, felt themselves superior to free Negroes of undiluted African stock. This attitude derived from the fact that the lighter slaves were most often manumitted, particularly if they were the children of their owners, and that in other situations, when as slaves they gained the favor of their masters, they were permitted to engage in some remunerative enterprise with the proceeds of which they eventually might purchase their own freedom. These free people of color, or *affranchis*, formed an important part of the Haitian population in pre-Revolutionary times,[13] and played a principal role in the development of Haitian culture. It was through them that European civilization flowed, since because of the closeness of their contacts with the whites they were the instrument by means of which the aboriginal African heritage of the slaves was modified to produce the forms in which it is found in Haiti today.[14]

Yet for all the importance of the freed mixed-bloods in the attainment of Haitian independence and in the fixing of the patterns of Haitian culture, they, like the whites, were but relatively few in number, their strength being but from five to ten per cent of that of slaves.[15] In attempting to analyze the manner in which the present amalgam that is the civilization of Haiti was formed, it is consequently necessary to revert to a consideration of those who were in the majority, the full-blooded Negroes. The tribes from which these Negroes were principally derived have been indicated, together with the outlines of the civilizations of the region of Africa from which they were drawn. To this must be added, as has been for the whites with whom they came in contact, an analysis of the so-

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cial classes to which they belonged, as well as the circumstances of their enslavement, their treatment in Africa before shipment to the New World and during the voyage, their initiation into their new mode of life, and the manner in which they lived as slaves, since all of these facts had considerable bearing on the processes which shaped the behavior of their descendants who now inhabit the island.

The integrated political organization of West Africa has been described, as well as the important fact that the class stratification in that region was almost as fixed and its social implications almost as far-reaching as in France. Even the early writers recognized that not all slaves came from the same ranks of society, just as they understood that there were various ways in which enslavement could be achieved. Père Labat, who lived in the West Indies for many years, listed four classes from which slaves were drawn. First, he says, were those whose punishments against native law had been commuted to perpetual banishment — that is, to slavery " for the private profit of the kings "; second were the prisoners of war; third were those who, already the slaves of native princes or of those persons to whom they had been given by these princes, were sold to meet the need of their masters for money; while fourth, comprising the greatest proportion of the slaves, were those snatched from their homes by the marauding bands of robbers who, with the connivance of native rulers, carried on these raids to satisfy the demands of the European dealers.[15] This classification and others of the period, though generally accepted and repeated by later writers, tells little concerning the ranks of society from which the slaves were drawn, except as this may be inferred. For this one must go to present-day West Africa, where a lively tradition of the slave-trade has survived and offers valuable supplementary information.[16]

In the light of the existing traditions in Dahomey and Nigeria, it is evident that from the point of view of the African, Labat's four classes must be compressed into two — the

1; Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

stew," which has continued current from the time of its publication by St. John until today.[48] Yet African religious practices were being constantly combated by the Catholic Church, for even in the period of revolt the priests had remained largely unharmed, and when Christophe was elevated to the throne, he appointed two archbishops. After the establishment of the Republic, Catholicism continued as the State religion, so that by the early nineteenth century, as Mackenzie mentions, thirty-eight clergy were active in Haiti, all under the control of the Bishop of Santo Domingo, and all presumably nominated and paid by the President of Haiti.[49] Though for a period there was an attempt to develop a national Church, the missionary work done during the colonial days left too strong a tradition of Catholicism to be overcome, and consequently a Concordat was signed with Rome in 1860, which has remained in effect ever since.[50]

Though the story of the cultural history of Haiti between 1804 and the present cannot thus be more than sketched, yet the background is known, and enough can be gathered from accounts of Haitian life during this interval to enable us to see that the varied cultural impulses were shaping the lives of the people throughout these years. With some understanding of the roots of the resulting culture in French and African traditions, then, let us once more turn to the valley of Mirebalais and consider the life of the Haitian peasant as it is lived today.

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CHAPTER XIII

AFRICA AND EUROPE IN HAITIAN LIFE

With the historical background of Haitian culture and its present-day organization in mind, we may now seek to disentangle the varied sources from which the institutions described in the preceding pages have been derived. The formalized expressions of religion will be treated in the chapter which follows; here the manner in which Europe and Africa have determined the forms of other phases of Haitian peasant life will be analyzed.

Even such a simple aspect of peasant life as the house, or *caille*, as it is termed, furnishes an illustration of this intermingling of cultures. In the countryside the typical dwelling is a rectangular structure of two rooms with a thatched gabled roof and walls of woven withes daubed with mud.[1] The rectangular floor plan and the roof are of West African type, but since both of these are also familiar in Europe, the house thus probably represents the coalescence of two dwelling forms which were originally not strikingly unlike each other. The type of thatching is purely African, as is the wall construction, for walls of twilled withes can be seen in West Africa today. On the other hand, what there is of furniture is entirely European. The African stool has given way to the

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APPENDIX I

THE GODS OF THE VODUN PANTHEON

ONE of the most impressive facts about studies of Haitian peasant belief is the absence of any attempt at systematic treatment of the deities of the *vodun* cult, as concerns either their attributes, their functions, or their relationship to one another. Indeed, there are but two exceptions to this statement; Dorsainvil (I, pp. 174–5) has published a list of the names of gods, placing them in categories according to their African derivations, and Parsons (I, *passim*) has made available her notes on the characteristics of the deities of which she was told while working in the island. Otherwise, one reads merely of "the serpent-god Damballa," or of "Papa Ogun," or some other isolated designation. It therefore seemed of capital importance in making this study to obtain both names of deities and as much information concerning these gods as possible, and the resulting data are presented here.

One reason why perhaps not more of such "systematic theology" of *vodun* as exists has been made available is the great degree of individual variation which confronts the student seeking this kind of information, since differences of opinion are invariably encountered. Even priests do not by any means agree, for these men and women are supreme individualists, each being the worshipper of particular deities and exploiting special skills, with the result that the frame of reference within

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APPENDIX II

SOME COMMENTS ON METHOD

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●121 THE MATERIAL presented in this book was gathered during the summer of 1934, when an expedition was arranged that made it possible for Mrs. Herskovits and myself to spend a little more than three months in Mirebalais. For so comparatively short a stay, it was particularly advantageous to have two persons carry on the work, each of whom brought to the study of Haitian culture a background of experience with related Negro civilizations in the New World and in West Africa. This enabled the study to begin at a point of considerable familiarity with the underlying sanctions of Haitian institutions.

According to plan, the investigation was concentrated in a restricted region. It therefore follows that unless explicitly stated, all references to custom and belief in this book have bearing only upon the folk of the valley where the study was conducted. No sweeping generalizations for all of Haiti are to be deduced, for regional variations do exist and are of no little importance in suggesting African tribal differences in custom which have been retained because of the African tradition of cultural autonomy for separate localities.

The greatest disadvantage of a short field-study is that the resulting picture of the culture must of necessity be a seasonal one. No first-hand description of the important festivities that

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mark the New Year, the time of harvest, All Saints' Day, or Easter can be given; on the other hand, the accounts of those portions of the agricultural cycle that take place during the rainy season, especially the operations of the important co-operative work-groups, could be followed carefully. In the field of religion, good fortune and a friendly entrée, the harvest of many months spent in field-work among Negro peoples elsewhere, but above all in Guinée — Africa — afforded invitations to a number of private ceremonies that might occur at any season. And the same background, together with the insatiable interest of the Negro in the nature and the functioning of his gods, made for such detailed discussions of native theological concept and philosophical point of view as could not have been bettered no matter what the time of year.

In the field, the procedure followed in earlier investigations was continued; a house was found in the village where it was possible to settle down and quietly observe life as it drifted past the door. A number of acquaintances became habitual visitors, and these, together with those others whose services as interpreters were needed, especially in the early days of the stay when the understanding of Créole and the ability to converse in it were limited, constituted those to whom questions were most frequently put or to whom happenings that had been observed were referred for clarification. Agreement on all points, or any point, in fact, bearing either on belief or ritual observance was by no means invariably found, but soundness of method in the study of culture must recognize that there are no "correct" answers to questions of custom; and that the acceptance of the fact of individual differences of behavior and point of view within the general framework of a given set of traditions is the only valid approach to the realities of human civilization.

Obviously, not all the material presented here is the result of first-hand observation, for much insight can be derived from the method of question and answer when carefully used

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tity in the scheme of things. Implicit in this is a sense of dignity that does not permit a man to escape the dictates set by any caste lines that may be drawn. The ethnographer, again, especially if he be a white man, has what has been called a high degree of social visibility, and any attempt to live according to the canons of native life would forthwith expose him to the thrusts of a deadly weapon in the hands of the Negro, the weapon most destructive of that mutual respect that is the basis for all free and friendly intercourse between two human beings, whatever their race — ridicule. In Negro cultures the white student must be content to remain what he actually is, an observer. He can and must be, if his work is to be of real worth, a sympathetic observer, and given patience, tact, and sincerity, he will form warm friendships among the native folk after he comes to know them well, so that as a friend it will not be denied him to share with them their inner values. It is on this basis that the work reported on in this volume was carried out.

Another aspect of method is implicit in the form in which the field material has been presented in this book. Studies such as this, concerned with a people whose ascertainable past history shows the effect of first-hand, continued contact between two cultures, have in recent years come to be termed *acculturation* studies. Investigations of this sort differ from those of a more conventional type in that they not only recognize and stress the fact that contact between peoples is basic to human life; but on the assumption that all cultures, no matter how remote or primitive, reflect this fact, frankly take as their material the customs of societies where the technology, habits, and beliefs are the result of definitely ascertainable historic contacts. For this approach holds that if a competent analysis is made of the base-line from which the process of change in a given society took its beginnings, and if the effects of the applications of these stimuli are carefully recorded, a more pre-

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cise determination of the dynamics of cultural change and the inner relationship of cultural elements will be possible than can come from the use of any other method.

It is not suggested that other approaches to these problems have not made their contributions of importance, nor that they will not in the future continue to aid in throwing light on the difficult questions relating to the nature of culture and its interaction with its human carriers. But those who are devoting themselves to the discovery of historical processes through "reconstructions" of the movements of peoples and cultures tend to neglect the inner relationships that give to a culture the significance it has for those who live under it. In similar fashion, those who abjure history and devote themselves to the analyses of the interrelationships and functioning of the elements of a single remote "simple" society are handicapped by the static nature of their approach, by their neglect of the basic principle that every culture is a unique historical continuum, and by their resulting naïveté in the face of cultural change.

The gap between these positions is filled by the study of acculturation. If this approach be considered from the side of cultural dynamics, it is seen that of all who study primitive societies, the student of acculturation alone works under the conditions of control afforded by reference to recorded history. On the other hand, he is also in a strategic position to study the interrelationship between the elements of a given culture and the manner in which the functioning whole influences the individuals who live under it. For how better analyze the mechanisms of culture than under those conditions where, to varying degrees, forces that are known entities rather than hypothetical reconstructions have been operative or are actually at work? How better attack the difficult problems of the inner relationships between the elements of a given culture and their influence on the human psyche than in those situations where the psychological stresses and strains

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incident upon culture-change enable the student to observe, under conditions of known historical control, the results of changes in settled habits and belief and behavior?

Foremost among the considerations that present themselves in this connection is that of the value of utilizing historical documentation as an aid in the study of culture. This has general relevance, since the obliviousness of students of primitive societies to historical records bearing upon the peoples they study is a commonplace, while no less so is the failure of historians adequately to treat the information they uncover about primitive peoples in the records through which they have worked. In a sense, this is neither surprising nor blameworthy. Each group has its own techniques, so that just as the ethnologist is not competent as an archivist, in like manner the historian finds it difficult both to assess the value of information concerning primitive folk, and to present it so that its greatest usefulness may be realized.

In studying Haitian culture, however, the employment of both historical and ethnological data is almost mandatory. The serious errors that a lack of both kinds of background has given rise to cannot be overlooked, matters so fundamental as the names of African tribes given the slaves in the early historical sources being an important case in point. Thus, the term *Caplahou*, a geographical one, is given as a tribal designation in a number of modern works, while elsewhere the Ibo are listed as a Nago sub-tribe, quite without realization that the Ibo and Yoruban Nago not only are separated by a considerable distance, but that in their cultural affiliations they differ widely. More striking, and more amusing, is the translation of the word *marassa* given by one popularizer who, lacking knowledge of the existence of the twin cult in Africa, rendered it as "the spirit of the race."

On the other hand, attempts to interpret Haitian culture without reference to historical documentation have also been subject to unfortunate errors. Significant here are the failures

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121 to recognize that many of the condemned traits of Haitian
127 culture ascribed to innate Negro characteristics actually represent retentions of the patterns of the pre-Revolutionary masters of the island. In the combination of the two disciplines, then — the utilization of available historical sources concerning a people to aid in an understanding of their ethnology, and the use of material derived from the study of present-day primitive folk to aid the historian in evaluating and elucidating his findings — the potentialities of this dual approach are evident in this study of the forces behind Haitian acculturation, and its results.

121 Attention may finally be called to the range of problems inherent in the phenomenon of socialized ambivalence marking so much of Haitian psychology, whose attack should add to an understanding of the influence of culture upon the formation of personality. For evidently those situations where acculturation is continuing or has constituted a factor of importance in the ascertainable historic past of a people afford many more searching leads than those others where a stable, " uncontaminated " series of cultural patterns create far fewer problems of adjustment and maladjustment.

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Preface

Every student of Haitian life is soon impressed by the richness of the materials spread out before him and the necessity of limiting his field of investigation. A study of Haitian religious practices, for example, draws one deeper and deeper into profusion, variation, and contradiction. One finds little difficulty in drawing a generalized picture with swift, bold lines; but when he descends into detail he discovers that the broad generalizations of the religious system contain within them many shifting and even warring motifs, and that what in one region is held to be true is not so regarded in another. The gods of *Vodoun* that are revered in one village are given only perfunctory treatment in another. Rites for the dead have a common denominator everywhere in the country, but each community brings to them something of its own or emphasizes traditions that elsewhere are forgotten. So it is also with music and dancing. A traditional drum rhythm may have one name in the north and another in the south, or a certain rhythm may be called by different names. There are diverse opinions about which dances are preferred by certain deities. The meaning of a song can be interpreted differently by different people. It is therefore no wonder that competent works on Haiti do not completely agree with one another in many respects, or that they seem, now and then, to be saying different or even contradictory things. Yet in many instances the seeming inconsistencies are in reality only minor variants within an overall scheme.

The purpose of this book is to present a broad view of certain aspects of Haitian culture and wherever possible to extract some of the flavor of Haitian thinking as well as its sense. It is easy to be fooled in regard to both. I remember seeing an old bearded man in the mountains beyond Furcy walking around his freshly hoed garden breaking a ripe tomato into small juicy bits which he scattered on the ground. It was about as primitive a method of planting as I had ever seen, and I wondered if even

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

one seed from that tomato would ever take root under the hot sun. Some time later, when I knew this man well, I talked to him about the care with which seeds must be planted if they are to grow properly. I told him how *we* grew *our* tomatoes. He listened carefully, nodding his head. When I had finished he said: "Yes, that must be a good way to do things in your country. But here in this valley God is good. He does not forget his children. From the broken tomato many plants will sprout. When God is good to you, you do not have to count the seeds." I suggested that perhaps one should not waste any of the precious seeds that God had provided; and to this he replied: "How is there waste? My garden is made to flourish by Zaka [the country man's special deity]. Some people give Zaka a feast every year, but between times they forget. Zaka helps me in my work, and I don't forget him. When I break the tomato and put it on the ground that way, it is a little taste for Zaka. Whatever I plant, I give him some. He is good to me, I am good to him."

What I learned from many incidents like this one was that the eye does not always see correctly. The old man was not just planting tomatoes, nor was he performing a conventionalized ritual act. It was a highly personalized act of faith in nature and confidence in the deity who shared his work.

A large part of this book deals with Vodoun, the religious practices based on West African traditions. One soon discovers that the songs and dances of Vodoun ritual are not merely music and motion supplementing and decorating more serious affairs. Virtually every aspect of Vodoun ritual is placative or invocational. The songs that are sung and the dances that are danced are direct supplication of various supernatural forces.

Undoubtedly, a number of principles which are put forward in this study do not apply equally to every region of Haiti; but they are, I think, true in general terms. Not until one has accepted the fact that different explanations exist for given phenomena, that the same rites are performed in different fashion in different places, and that the cult priests themselves do not agree on many details, may one begin to work toward a general view of the Haitian scene.

All of Haitian life is not Vodoun. And there are of course some Haitians who are relatively outside the central circle of its influence. But the inner meanings of Vodoun and its relationship to the total view of life permeate the entire scene. Music, too, binds together practically the entire fabric of Haitian existence. It is essential not only to the cult temple but to countless workaday activities. Agrarian work groups often perform their tasks to the accompaniment of a drum. And in the cult temple, the iron hoe of the fields often serves as a percussion instrument.

The Drum and the Hoe is the result of studies made over a period of

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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[p. v]

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

By Sidney W. Mintz*

THE *Haitian People*, by James G. Leyburn, was first published by the Yale University Press in 1941. The author, a sociologist, sought to provide his readers with a "connected story of the growth of . . . [Haiti's] social institutions out of the backgrounds of slavery and French colonial life . . . [and] of the slow shaping of these institutions through the nineteenth century" (p. v). Asserting that a people's past is an essential aspect of the full understanding of their present, Leyburn wasted no time in arguments over the disciplinary affiliation of his research results: "Whether the book be classified as social history or as sociology is largely a matter of indifference, for the line between these subjects can hardly be drawn without doing violence to comprehensive insight. To view a people with understanding in the characteristic setting of their institutions—marriage, religion, property arrangements, and the rest—one needs not only a description of their ways, but also a knowledge of how they came to be what they are" (p. vi).

The Haitian People enjoyed an immediate success. One of the very few books to deal with that country's crucial century of isolation (1804–1915), it is distinguished by careful scholarship, restrained interpretation, and a refreshing modesty; in these regards it differs from nearly every modern work written on the Republic of Haiti. And although many excellent books and articles on Haitian life have appeared since 1941, anyone who wishes to get the best interpretive overview of the history and culture of that country is well advised to start with Leyburn's contribution.

When *The Haitian People* first appeared, it was given a warm and

* Dr. Rémy Bastien, M. Leslie F. Manigat, Jacqueline Wei Mintz, and Mr. Michael G. Owen provided valuable critical help in the preparation of this introduction. The author of *The Haitian People*, Professor James G. Leyburn, encouraged me to undertake the writing of the introduction, and offered useful advice on its form and content. I am much indebted to all of these persons for their generous assistance, but they are in no way responsible for the interpretations I have made here.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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War II and its aftermath, and the subsequent dissipation of those gains; the "social revolution" of January 1946, ushering in the Estimé regime; the boom in the arts and tourism, and their later contractions; the rise and subsequent fall of the Magloire government (1950-56), and the uneasy interregnum that followed it; and finally, the growth of the Duvalier monolith.

Over the span of those years, social science literature on Haiti has increased significantly, and outsiders, as well as the Haitians themselves, can now know much more about the country and its people. But some of the most important questions raised by Leyburn's book remain substantially unanswered. *The Haitian People* is a classic because its author phrased so well the major issues in the growth of Haitian national institutions, and no subsequent work is likely to supplant it in this regard. But its value has been heightened over the years by the lack of any equally penetrating analysis dealing with the period since 1941 or specifying the relative importance of various institutional forces in the contemporary structure of Haitian society. Thus, for instance, much too little is known of the culture and social organization of Haiti's predominantly rural population, in spite of considerable anthropological research since 1941. More detailed studies of the rural economy are particularly necessary, both to assess developmental possibilities and to understand better the relationship of rural sectors to the national economy. Sociological and economic analyses of folk religion—*vodoun*—are wanting, even though psychological and descriptive studies of this religion have appeared in large numbers. The general conceptual problem of community definition, structure, and organization, which has long plagued students in the Caribbean area, has been barely raised in the case of rural Haiti. Finally, our understanding of Haitian class structure, both local and national, and its corollaries in economic, political, and social institutions, is still slight. Here the need for more research seems particularly acute, since no adequate grasp of the nature of Haitian society at large will be possible until the fit of the rural sectors with the national class structure is better known. On this understanding, among others, may hinge the likelihood of success of any future developmental effort in Haiti.

It was with Haiti as a nation that Leyburn dealt in his book, and his analysis of national institutions and social structure excited more comment and reflection within Haiti itself than any other part of his

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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114 treatment. In the absence of sufficient analytic material on the intervening years since his book was written, a prefatory note such as this can do little more than comment on Haitian society, either in terms of its present design or in terms of the recent events that may have modified it.

121 114 The central thesis of Leyburn's book is that Haitian society is sharply divided into two segments, and that the national institutional structure is such that no significant alteration in that division has occurred in the entire course of Haiti's history as a sovereign nation. At the base of the society is the rural agricultural sector, making up perhaps as much as 95 per cent of the population; at the top the elite, which dominates the governmental apparatus and all national institutions. These two segments of the society differ, in Leyburn's view, in all important regards: level of income, source of income, education, language, religion, social forms, values and attitudes, and all else. By carefully describing the history of Haitian society from the eve of the revolution until the midst of the United States occupation, he reveals both the origin of this vast social cleavage and the various means employed for its perpetuation. Leyburn was so impressed by the gap which separated yeomanry and elite that he chose to label these social segments castes rather than classes. Members of the elite earn their livings as rentiers, merchants, professionals, and in government, and never engage in manual labor of any sort. They are predominantly urban in residence; their sons attend private lower schools, and then go on to higher education, usually abroad. They are French-speaking, although they also speak Creole, Haiti's national language. Elite religion is Catholicism, elite forms of marriage and domestic organization are "legitimate" and "western." Elite members view themselves as a kind of aristocracy, and feel little commonality in their sharing of Haiti and of Haitian history with the yeomen.

In sharp contrast, the yeomanry is rural, poor, works the land, is illiterate and Creole-speaking only, believes in *vodoun* rather than in orthodox Catholicism, usually marries by common law and is sometimes polygynous, and remains substantially isolated from the outer world. Finally and importantly—though its particular significance is changing—the elite differs from the rural sector in that the countryman is predominantly negroid in phenotype, while members of the elite are prevailingly lighter-skinned.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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FOREWORD

The United States, embarked upon a policy of good neighborliness toward the other countries of the Western Hemisphere, is beginning to improve its acquaintance with the republics to the south. Most of its efforts at present are directed toward an understanding of the large and important powers, such as Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, which, because of their size and resources, are potentially our greatest allies—or, if we fail in our policies, our sources of greatest danger. There are, however, twenty republics to the south of us, many of them small. A truly good neighbor does not ignore near-by families who are lacking in wealth, even those who are known to differ among themselves.

Of the twenty Latin-American republics, the second smallest is Haiti. The United States was only twenty years old when the people of this little country (which, for all its diminutive size, had been France's wealthiest colony of the eighteenth century) fought their own war of independence, and in 1804 founded the second free state in the hemisphere. Haiti has many claims upon the attention of the United States: its war against France in 1802–3 was at least a contributing factor in Napoleon's willingness to sell Louisiana to this country; it was the first independent Negro state in the modern world; its foreign policy has long been intertwined with our own; finally, the nineteen-year American Occupation of the country has brought us into an even closer relationship with Haiti than independent factors could produce.

When the country was young there was a spate of books trying to answer the question whether a nation ruled by blacks could long endure. In more recent years, works on the Antillean republic have generally dealt with single phases of its life, as for example its political relations with the United States, or its "Voodoo" practices. There is, however, no connected story of the growth of its social institutions out of the backgrounds of slavery and French colonial life, or of the slow shaping of these institutions through the nineteenth century. It is this growth which the present volume undertakes to describe. Political history has been introduced only so far as necessary to provide the convenient pegs upon which most of us are accus-

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
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121 tomed to hang our knowledge of the growth, development, and decay of social institutions. Whether the book be classified as social history or as sociology is largely a matter of indifference, for the line between those subjects can hardly be drawn without doing violence to comprehensive insight. To view a people with understanding in the characteristic setting of their institutions—marriage, religion, property arrangements, and the rest—one needs not only a description of their ways, but also a knowledge of how they came to be what they are.

167 178 563 Two centuries ago nine tenths of the Negro ancestors of the modern Haitians were still in Africa, living under the mores of their own localities, and for the most part entirely unacquainted with the mores of the Western World (or, as we ethnocentrically call it, the "civilized" world). First transplanted as slaves to the Caribbean island, then gaining their freedom after some mixture of blood with the white French, the Haitians have built up not only a state but a Haitian culture. The problems to be discussed in this book are as follows:

114 What social structure was set up after the independence in 1804, and by what methods? This question calls for a description of the economic, political, religious, marital, and class organization of the Haitians.

How did this structure function during the next century? There is often a difference between a people's expressed intentions and their ability to carry them out: a state sometimes borrows from some other power a type of constitution which, though logically admirable, does not work effectively under local conditions.

Which structural and functional elements of Haitian life were social heritages from the African past; which were taken over from French models; which were mergings of the two, and which seem to be variations newly produced on Haitian soil?

178 The great leaders of early days, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Dessalines, Christophe, Pétion, and Boyer, made an effort to direct Haitian economic and political life along definite lines; however, the pressure of daily life, the necessity of feeding half a million people most of whom had had no experience in solving complicated problems of any sort, soon made it obvious that logical social structures would not long remain logical. The ways evolved were characteristically Haitian; ways in general unplanned, grow-

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XIV

COMMERCE

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THIS book is no more fundamentally concerned with the detailed economic history of Haiti than with its intimate political events; our attention is bent here, as elsewhere, on the broad functioning of social institutions. Peasant agricultural life has already been depicted: the products of the peasant's labor, when marketed, have brought whatever prosperity the state and its ruling caste have enjoyed. These marketed products have consisted chiefly of coffee, with a very little sugar and cotton. The present section concerns Haiti's economic relations with the outside world.

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439

It was the commerce of the colony of Saint-Domingue which made that small division of the Antillean island so valuable to its mother country. Exports in the last year before the revolution are estimated at fifty million dollars (461 million livres) in terms of modern money.[1] Although commerce was seriously interrupted by the troubled state of affairs in the 1790's, the upswing of prosperity under Toussaint indicated that the country had still highly profitable enterprises. Merchants in the young United States were particularly intent upon the benefits to be derived from trade in molasses. All foreign trade was violently interrupted once more in 1802–3, when the revolution was in progress; but the interest of larger nations in what would issue from the Haitian declaration of independence in 1804 was out of all apparent proportion to the size of the tiny country. Their interest was partially in the question of whether ex-slaves could rule themselves politically; even more they were interested in the economic future of Haiti.

Three divergent economic policies were pursued by the early rulers, three variations among which future presidents might choose the one in their opinion most profitable. That of Dessalines was progressively to isolate Haiti, tolerating foreign trade only so long as it seemed necessary to establish the country's self-sufficiency. Christophe's, on the other hand, was the traditional monarch's

1. H. P. Davis, *Black Democracy* (2d ed., New York, 1929), p. 25; Antenor Firmin, *M. Roosevelt, président des Etats-Unis, et la république d'Haïti* (New York, 1905), pp. 435–436.

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XIX

SOCIOLOGICAL POSTSCRIPT

ALTHOUGH conceived along sociological lines, this book has made an effort to avoid the use of many technical sociological terms, and to keep discussion on a basis intelligible to the layman. The emphasis has been placed upon the major institutions of Haiti, with such excursions into political history as were necessary to establish sequences; the main objective has constantly been to show what adjustments a group of ex-slaves in a tropical country made to their sudden independence, and to indicate the course of readjustments during the succeeding century or more.

It is never given to a people to start with a clean slate. This generation is inevitably, to a large degree, what the preceding generation made it, in habits of mind, in rules of behavior, in ambitions, in taste. The younger generation does not succeed the older, but rather lives along with it, becoming a part of all it has been, unconsciously assimilating traditional rules, attitudes, ways. Yet young people, meeting their own crises, are perpetually restive under the codes of their elders, and are continually exerting pressure to change, or even effecting minor changes. The result is that the mental characteristics we know as "culture" are never stationary. Some cultures change rapidly under the stimulus of crisis and international contacts, while others give the impression of being quiescent because of isolation and lack of outside pressure.

In spite of the fact that mankind never has the opportunity to begin wholly afresh, shaking off the trammels of a miserable past, it nevertheless sometimes happens that the retaining walls which have kept culture within narrow channels may, like the collapse of a dyke, suddenly give way, allowing a flood of rapid changes to occur. Eventually the turbulence will subside, and then one can see, as it were, a relatively placid lake with new landmarks hardly recognizable in terms of what used to exist when the old dykes held. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the end of the dictatorship of Díaz in Mexico are examples.

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ranging from those requiring strict observance down to those permitting latitude of behavior.

It has, then, been the primary purpose of this book to show the gradual development (the word is used with no connotation of progress toward a conscious goal) of a consistent group of mores and social institutions in Haiti since the moment of her independence. The course of Haitian social history provides an almost unlimited opportunity for further study along the lines of contemporary American sociological research. Certain skeptics have pertinently criticized this sociology as narrowly provincial, calling it a social science limited only to the American scene, and valid consequently only for American society. Such a charge is precisely the reverse of that directed at European sociology, which finds congenial the development of philosophies of history independent of research in any specific field.

If the active American sociologist should extend his field of investigation he would, whatever his dominant interest, find much to reward his research in Haiti. For example, some of the most productive work in the United States has been in studies of neighborhoods,[2] communities,[3] and regions.[4] No neighborhood study has ever been made in Haiti, nor any regional study. Herskovits[5] has pointed the way to all future students of Haitian communities. Most research done by scholars in Haiti, however, has concerned itself with one or another of the social institutions (religion has been the most popular) rather than with thorough studies of individual communities.

For the social psychologist Haiti presents a rich and untouched field. It has the advantages of a limited geography and population, and so is less complex than the United States; yet Haitian problems are familiar enough to make comparison with American problems valid. Not only has there as yet been no investigation of the process of socialization, that is, of what happens to children as they take on

2. The neighborhood is generally defined as a primary group in society in which face-to-face contacts are frequent and intimate.

3. The community is a group of people living in comparative proximity, sharing basic interests and activities, having relatively common usages and traditions, and acknowledging common rule.

4. The region is a functional part of a larger area of economic, cultural, and geographical homogeneity. The Southeastern States of the United States are conceived as a region; in Haiti, the five departments are regions.

5. In his *Life in a Haitian Valley*. This is a study of the community in and around Mirebalais.